

A
B R I E F E N Q U I R Y,

CONCERNING THE

4
DIGNITY of the ORDINANCE

THE
L O R D ' s S U P P E R ;

K
AND THE CARE THAT ALL, ESPECIALLY
MAGISTRATES AND MINISTERS,
OUGHT TO TAKE TO PREVENT AND REMOVE THE
OCCASIONS OF ITS BEING LESSENER.

1 SAM. II. 30.

*Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall
be lightly esteemed.*

—Procul hinc, procul este Profani.

VIRG.

Written in 1732,

By a MEMBER of the CHURCH of ENGLAND;

And now re-printed verbatim from the ORIGINAL EDITION,

By a PROTESTANT, DISSENTER.

L E E D S :

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TO
THE REVEREND THE VICAR,
AND
THE OTHER CLERGY,
OF
THE PARISH OF LEEDS.

REVEREND GENTLEMEN,

I Take the liberty to recommend the following Tract to your serious attention. It relates to a subject in which you are professionally concerned. If it be incumbent upon the Disciples of Christ to obey all his injunctions, it must be of equal importance that none of his institutions be applied to purposes that are prejudicial or foreign to their original design.

Whatever be the issue of the present application of the Protestant Dissenters for the recovery of what they deem their civil rights, and which they are confident is perfectly consistent with the safety of the Established Church, it surely cannot be a matter of indifference to any who believe the divine authority of the New Testament, whether the Ordinance of the Lord's Supper be employed as an engine of State Policy; or whether it be confined to its primitive use, be celebrated solely as a solemn memorial of the Death of Christ, and be received with a single view to spiritual improvement.

This is the professed object of the enquiry which is now respectfully offered to your consideration. Of its author I am entirely ignorant; nor can I form a conjecture concerning his personal situation or profession: but he was evidently a serious member of the Church of England, and strongly attached to its discipline and doctrines.

I have been scrupulously careful to reprint his work *verbatim* from the original edition of 1732. This I have done, not because I entirely agree with him in every incidental sentiment which he has introduced, or in every particular expression which he has employed; there are very few, if any, uninspired writings, in which a man who reads with attention and exercises his judgment on what he reads, will find every minute turn of thought and expression exactly coincident with his own ideas: but because, as far as I am able to understand the subject, his general reasoning on the main argument is forcible and conclusive; and from a persuasion that a publication which is intended chiefly for the members of the Establishment, will be more readily received, and more fairly examined, when it comes in the first instance from one of their own body, and when the principles on which it is founded, are derived from their own canons, articles and liturgy, as well as from those sacred oracles, to which every denomination of Christians appeals as the rule of their faith and practice.

I am, with due respect,

REVEREND GENTLEMEN,

Your peaceable Fellow-Citizen,

Your faithful Fellow-Subject,

And your sincere Fellow-Christian,

WILLIAM WOOD,

LEEDS, Feb. 8, 1790.

A B R I E F

BRIEF ENQUIRY, &c.

SEVERAL vindications of the *Christian Religion*, have been published within these few years, by very able persons, who herein have well employed their capacities and learning. I should rejoice, had I ground to say, the success hath answered the pains and labour; but I very much fear, lest the *personal ill conduct* of some who know better, and the *misguided zeal* of others, for they know not what, have unhappily prevented the desired success.

Especially, I cannot forbear thinking, that the very *great and sad disregard of sacred institutions*, hath been a powerful obstacle to their success, and hath had a main hand, in promoting the *growth of infidelity*. The persons and office of clergymen, have been treated in a scornful manner, and your little wits, when they have set up for *free-thinkers*, and have learnt at every turn to bawl out *priest craft*, have hereupon thought very extraordinarily of themselves.

The *Lord's-Day*, which christians justly suppose, is now to be kept sacred, in the room of the seventh day of the week, and that (with respect to the observance of it) by virtue of the fourth commandment, solemnly to be repeated each *Sunday* in our churches, with a suitable prayer for *pardoning mercy for past profanations*, and *grace to assist in keeping that law for the future*: Yet the thinness of assemblies in churches, and the multitude of idle persons loitering about on that day, do too plainly evidence, that when such at church join in that petition, it is with lips only, and for custom sake, and not with their hearts.

With respect to the holy appointment of *Baptism*, there is too much reason to fear, that the generality of those who engage in the service (notwithstanding the office of baptism if attended to would inform them better) think that it is no more than the *giving a name to the child*; and perhaps hence the corrupt custom in many places, of calling private baptism, a *naming the child*: And when afterwards, according to the direction of the rubric, the child is carried to the church, to have the services performed

performed for it there specified, this is called by many, the child's receiving its *full baptizm*. And as for those who stand as *sureties for children*; do not too many of them think they sufficiently perform their duty, if on the day of christening, they stand for the child, and afterwards present it with some token to remember them by, without having any further regard to the things they so solemnly stipulated and promised to perform?

But I take it, that the slight regard had to the most sacred and venerable institution of the *Lord's Supper*, hath had the most unhappy tendency of all, to make men question, whether there be any thing at all in religion; or, whether men's profession thereof, be any more than what is owing to custom, or designed for shew.

I design not in this attempt, to vindicate the honour of every *abused christian institution*; but only (as the title will give the reader ground to expect) that of the *Lord's Supper*: And if I perform the first part of the proposed work, and evidence the *dignity of the institution*; I think it will follow as a natural and necessary consequence, that this dignity should be maintained and kept up, as far as in them lies, by all who profess to believe it: Especially by *Magistrates and Ministers*.

I shall begin then, with offering some considerations to evidence the *dignity of this sacred ordinance*. Not that I can propose to offer entirely new things, but perhaps things may be set in somewhat *a new*, and I would hope *more striking light*. Many things are professedly believed and known, which yet have need to be repeatedly and in different ways inculcated; and possibly suitable impressions may be made upon our minds at one time, which have before been frequently attempted to be made, but without success.

It may not be improper to observe here, that the *things made use of in this ordinance*, though valuable and of great use to mankind, yet demand no *reverence* from us, but they become *venerable* on account of the *uses they are set apart unto*. And this method, of *consecrating some otherwise common things, to special and sacred purposes*, has been usual (I think) in all religions (whether true or false) and from that time forward, they have been looked upon and treated with *an higher regard than before*. What wonder then if the *author of the christian religion*, has pursued a method, which *human reason* hath so universally approved of, and given a kind of sanction unto. And therefore there is no ground for *contempt*, no nor of *less esteem*, on account of the *commonness of the things made use of in this sacred service*.

In evidencing the *dignity* whereof; I shall make use of *two sets of arguments*: The former to be drawn from the *New Testament account of this ordinance*; the other from the sentiments of the *Church of England*, as manifested by her *words*, and by her *practises*. And the arguments of both kinds, ought to weigh with every one that desires to be accounted a *true member thereof*.

I shall first produce some *scripture arguments* for evincing the *honour of this christian institution*.

In order hereto, let us consider the *institutor*, the *time of institution*, the *ends designed to be answered by the institution*; and lastly, the *solemn guard* the Apostle Paul, by the direction of the Holy Ghost, hath set about *this ordinance*, and what a representation he has given, of the consequences of an *undue regard* hereto.

First, If we consider, who was the *institutor of this ordinance*; this should raise our value for the *institution*. It was the *Lord Jesus Christ*; who did it not by proxy, nor by another in his name, but in his own person, according to the (a) authority vested in him, to do and appoint whatever might be for the good of his church.

Now though there are very different sentiments among men *what rank of beings Christ stands in*; yet those who sink his nature lowest, suppose him to be the *most excellent of men*, that he had a large commission from God, had a right to be our *lawgiver*, and had full power to alter, reverse, or constitute things in the church of God; and therefore even such persons are bound to regard the institution, for the sake of the institutor: but if we rise higher in our sentiments of Christ, if we think of him as more than a man, as above angels, yea, the Lord of angels (b); if we think of him (c) as *truly and properly God*, and to be honoured (d) as the Father; the higher thoughts we entertain of the *person*, the greater veneration should we have of the *institution*. If Christ be as the *Nicene Creed* declares, which all our Clergy subscribe, and so frequently pronounce as their own faith, the congregation joining in the rehearsal of it, *God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, of one substance with the Father, and who is to come again with glory to judge both the quick and dead*: I say, if we believe these articles, surely we shall think ourselves most strongly obliged, to pay a due regard to his appointments.

Secondly, The consideration of the *time*, when Christ instituted this ordinance, will bespeak our greater value for it. When (e)

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(a) Matth. xxviii. 18. (b) Heb. i. 6. (c) John i. 1. (d) John v. 23.
(e) Matth. xxvi. 20, &c.

our merciful and kind Redeemer, was just ready to enter upon the most *difficult and dreadful part of his work*, when he knew he was going (f) to be betrayed, denied, forsaken by his disciples, apprehended by his enemies, to suffer and die, and that with more than ordinary circumstances of shame and pain; then did he institute this ordinance: And it is certain, that *such a person, and at such a time*, would not appoint a *trifling thing*, or a matter of *small moment*; sure he that considers the circumstances, the institutor was in at the time of institution, will not flight the *solemn appointment of a dying Saviour*.

Thirdly, Let us consider the ends designed to be answered by this institution, in order to excite our greater regard unto it.

It was appointed, with a design that we might testify our *adherence and subjection to Christ*; and it seems analogous to our taking the *oaths of allegiance to the government*. It has its name *Sacrament*, from the *Sacramentum militare* of the *Romans*; and when we consider Christ as the (g) *Captain of our salvation*, by this we avow subjection to him, and solemnly profess our allegiance, and that we will fight under his banner.

It was designed also for a *commemoration of Christ's death*, as that which we are much concerned in, and ought to be deeply affected with. This end of the institution the apostle *Paul* makes particular (h) mention of; and it has a very natural tendency to answer this end.

Farther, it was designed to promote our *spiritual improvement*, to confirm and strengthen our *faith in Christ*, and excite in us a greater degree of *love to him*, who loved us so as to give himself for us.

Finally, it was designed to be a *bond of union* among christians, that they being many might, as the apostle speaks, be (i) *one bread*, that hereby they might be cemented, strongly knit together in mutual affection, as those who are united under one and the same head. How sad is it that the *bond of love* should ever be abused to promote *divisions*! And how plain is it from the scripture account of this service, that the designs proposed to be answered by it are *purely of a spiritual*, and not in the least of any inferior nature!

Fourthly, If we consider the *solemn guard*, *St. Paul* by divine direction, has set about this ordinance, and in what strong terms he has set forth, the *dangerous consequences* of an undue approach thereto, this will further serve to evidence its dignity. It is plain by his whole discourse, 1 Cor. xi. 20, &c. that unworthy receiving, is not barely a *possible thing*, but what we are, in *great danger* of, yea, is too common; that the guilt of unworthy receivers, has a kind of correspondence with theirs, who

(f) 1 Cor. xi. 23. (g) Heb. ii. 10. (h) 1 Cor. xi. 26. (i) 1 Cor. x. 17.

who *actually crucified the blessed Jesus*, and had their hands embued in his blood; that such expose themselves to *temporal judgments*, are in a sense *self-condemned*, and that they are in the utmost hazard of *eternal damnation*; and that to prevent these unhappy and dreadful consequences, the strictest examination, and most careful preparation is necessary.

Now I leave it to every considering and impartial person, whether so great a man as *St. Paul*, and one divinely inspired, would have said so much on this head, if the dignity of this ordinance were not exceeding great.

I proceed to the other set of *arguments*, to be drawn from the *sentiments of the Church of England*, as discoverable both from her *words*, and from her *practices*. Now though I do not expect, much less desire, these should be looked upon with the *same regard* as the former; yet it would be absurd for *any true Son of the Church*, not to regard or be influenced by them.

Let us first see what ideas concerning this ordinance, the *Church of England* by her *words* plainly designs to excite in our minds. If we consult her *Articles*, *Canons*, or *Communion-Service*, we shall find them full of the dignity thereof. The *xxviiiith article* declares, "That the Supper of the Lord, is
" not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have
" among themselves one to another; but rather it is a Sacra-
" ment of our Redemption by Christ's death: Insomuch,
" that to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith receive the
" same, the bread which we break, is a partaking of the
" Body of Christ, and likewise the cup of blessing is a par-
" taking of the Blood of Christ. And afterwards, the Body
" of Christ is given, taken and eaten in the supper, only after
" an heavenly spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the
" Body of Christ is received, and eaten in the supper, is
" faith."

The *xxvith*, *xxviith*, and *xxviiiith canons* set as strong a guard, as words are capable of being, about the Holy Table, were they but duely observed, directly excluding from the participation of this ordinance *notorious offenders*, *schismatics*, and *strangers*. Which evidences, that the compilers were carefully for maintaining the dignity of this service, and the reverence due thereto.

But the *Communion-Service* is more known by the generality, and more frequently consulted than *articles* or *canons*; and here, in as few, as *copious* and *strong expressions* can go, this institution has its honour secured.

First, In the *exhortation*, which is appointed to be read upon the *Sunday*, or some holiday immediately preceding, we

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are told, “ That the Sacrament being so *divine and comfortable* “ a thing, to them who receive it *worthily*, and so *dangerous* “ to them that will *presume* to receive it *unworthily* : My duty “ is to exhort you in the mean season, to consider the DIGNITY “ of that holy mystery, and the great peril of the unworthy “ receiving thereof.”—And so the *exhortation* proceeds to prepare carefully for the participating in that sacred ordinance.

Secondly, There is a strict charge in the *rubrics* before the *communion service*, to keep back from this ordinance, *open and notorious ill livers* ; and that those between whom it is perceived that malice and hatred reign, *be not suffered* to partake of the Lord’s table.

Thirdly, That part of the *communion service*, which is prefatory or by way of solemn introduction, to the actual administration of the ordinance shews, that it is no common or trivial thing we are going to engage in, when we approach the Lord’s table ; such as reciting the ten commandments, with an earnest prayer to be repeated after each ; doth not this plainly intimate, that every communicant is bound to endeavour after universal and uniform obedience, to the will of God ? Again, the rehearsing the *Nicene Creed*, the people standing, to signify it is their own faith : Does not this intimate, communicants must be *believers of Christian doctrines*, as well as *performers of Christian duties* ?

Again, the *sentences*, one or more of which the Priest is to recite, when he returns to the Lord’s table and begins the *Offertory*, seem to me designed to shew, what kind of persons they must be, who would approve themselves to be *worthy communicants*.

Fourthly, The *exhortation* that is made at the time of celebration, that as diligent trial and examination was necessary before any should presume to approach the holy table ; so the benefit will be exceeding great to *worthy communicants* : But on the other hand the *danger great, to receive unworthily* ; for then we are *guilty of the body and blood of Christ our Saviour*, and eat and drink our *own damnation*, not considering the Lord’s body ; we kindle God’s wrath against us ; we provoke him to plague us with divers diseases, and sundry kinds of death : And it concludes, To him (Christ) therefore with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, let us give (as we are most bounden) continual thanks, submitting ourselves wholly to his will and pleasure, and studying to serve him in true holiness and righteousness all the days of our life.

Fifthly, The humble confession to be made by minister and people, expressive of the deepest contrition and sorrow of heart
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for sin, and the most earnest repentance; professing that the remembrance of our sins is grievous, and the burden intolerable.

What a reflection would it be upon the wisdom of the Church, as well as its piety, to suppose such an *apparatus* as the several things mentioned, designed to introduce any thing, but a matter of very great consequence!

Sixthly, The solemn form of words to be used in the acts of communicating. When the minister delivers the bread; he is to say to each person, "The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy heart by faith with thanksgiving." And when he delivers the cup, he is to say, "The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life. Drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for thee, and be thankful."

When we lay all this together, surely if we may judge of the Church's sentiments by her words; she looks upon this as *a most sacred and solemn institution, and of the highest dignity.*

We proceed to discover her apprehensions of this ordinance from her practices.

First, The solemnity of placing the communion table *altar-wise*, at the upper end of the Church, upon a place advanced several steps, above the body of the Church, and railed in, the rails being set at some distance from the table, to keep the laity from a rude or near approach. Add to this the practice of many of our clergy, and others, who make a *low reverence towards the altar*, upon their coming into Church, and their going up to or towards the table.

Secondly, The practice of distributing the bread and wine at the rails, and expecting the communicants should come thither to participate. The minister not being willing to carry the elements about; perhaps lest some accident should happen, by stumbling or otherwise, and so they might fall to the ground.

Thirdly, The gesture to be used in communicating, *viz. kneeling*, to shew the utmost reverence. Which order we are told was well meant*, for a signification of an humble and grateful acknowledgment, of the benefits of Christ therein given, to all worthy receivers, and for avoiding profanation or disorder.

Fourthly, The practice of giving the sacrament, to *persons that desire it in their dying moments, as the most solemn preparation*

* See the advertisement at the end of the *Communion-Service*.

ration for eternity. Dying work is awful work ; and it is not usual or decent to *trifle with persons in such circumstances* : I suppose then, that the administration of this ordinance to dying persons, is designed to be of service to help them to die both safely and comfortably.

Now upon the whole ; What strange thoughts must we have of our Church, if we suppose she is not serious and in earnest in all this ? Is she trifling with her ministers, the clergy, and imposing on her members, the laity ? Surely No : We cannot but believe it is her design to infuse into our minds, a reverential regard to this sacred institution ; and that she really believes it worthy of so awful respect to be paid to it.

Thus I have gone through the first part of my proposed work ; and I would hope to the conviction, and satisfaction of unprejudiced and impartial readers ; so that they will be excited to have suitable and honourable thoughts of this ordinance, and will be rendered sincerely desirous to do what they can, to maintain the dignity, and to correct what has an unhappy tendency to degrade and lessen it in men's esteem.

I apprehend no christian ought to look upon himself as unconcerned : But surely *Magistrates and Ministers* are especially obliged to be careful in this matter.

If any advanced to the *office of magistracy*, and set in places of power and trust, should cast their eyes on these pages ; I would humbly offer to their thoughts this consideration : Can it be expected, if *Divine institutions* are disregarded and profanely trampled on, that *human appointments* will be conscientiously observed ? Nay, *magistracy* itself may come to have its honour lessened ; for he that will make bold with *one Divine institution* may with another. And may not men of corrupt minds, be ready to entertain less honourable thoughts of *magistracy*, though it be God's ordinance, as well as of the *Lord's Supper*, which is so also. Besides, I conceive the office of magistracy was designed to secure the honour of God, as well as the welfare of those over whom they are set. Now is it not for God's honour, to have the *dignity of his institutions* carefully maintained ; and as we must not condemn God's altar by *offering polluted bread*, Mal. i. 7. and thereby despise God's name, so must it be kept as free as possible from *all kind of defilements* ; but if the honour of God, the Supreme Magistrate, the King of Kings, be not regarded, what will become of the honour due to magistrates under him ?

To our clergy I would offer with all due regard. Will not the securing the honour of this ordinance, have a tendency to secure the honour of every other ordinance, and to establish
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the *dignity of the ministerial function*? The clergy were appointed and ordained, for the administration of ordinances. If ordinances then be looked upon as *mean things*, ministers will soon be looked upon as *mean persons*. Both duty then and interest, will strongly plead both with ministers and magistrates, to exert themselves, and use their interest, yea, the utmost of their endeavours, to prevent and remove every thing that may have a tendency to profane this institution, and also to secure its real and deserved honour.

I question not but some have been ready long ago to ask; Who is for profaning this ordinance? Or, How is its dignity lessened?

I would earnestly intreat such seriously to consider; first, If promiscuous admissions to the Lord's Table*: secondly, If an obliging all persons upon their entrance into any places of honour, trust or profit in the State, to receive the Holy Communion; I say, If both these have not an unhappy tendency hereunto?

As to the former; I am sensible there are some guards set, some rules laid down; But are they sufficient? Are they observed? And an insufficient unobserved rule, what can it avail? Who that purpose to communicate, give in their names to the Curate, at least the day before, as the *rubrick* directs? And perhaps it would be exceeding difficult, to comply with it in some large market-towns, where there is but one parish-church and the boundaries thereof of great extent. *Holbeach* in *Lincolnshire* particularly is a market-town of this kind, and there are villages near it likewise, where there are houses six, eight, yea, I think ten miles distant from the parish-church.

Besides, If a *notoriously wicked person* presents himself to the Communion, and he be rejected as he ought to be, the Minister so rejecting, is liable to a *prosecution*, unless he himself prosecutes the rejected, in the Spiritual Court within the space of fourteen days. And what can a *poor Curate* whose salary perhaps scarce amounts to 30*l. per annum*, and has a family to maintain, What can he do, I say, against his *powerful, rich and vicious neighbour* in the way of prosecution, and yet his conscience tells him, he ought to debar his access to that service, till charity shall suggest some ground to hope he is reformed? What *more effectual* method should be taken, to prevent such *promiscuous*, and as I think *irregular* admissions, I leave to the great wisdom and prudence of those, who have authority to rectify what is amiss.

But

* I know some whom promiscuous admissions have drove to the Dissenters for the sake of purer Communion. And this is one reason they bring for their dissent.

But if I mistake not, the case is harder still upon our Clergy, with respect to such as present themselves to the Lord's Table, in order to be qualified for the *execution of some office or employment civil or military*, whom I suppose, they have no power to reject, let their *character or conduct be what it will*. Yea, it seems an hardship upon the persons so obliged to qualify themselves.

Now concerning this obligation upon such Officers, to receive the Holy Communion, and on Ministers to admit them there-to; I would with the greatest deference and respect to my superiors, humbly propose the *following queries*.

First, Whether it be necessary a man should be of the *established religion* of a country, or adhere to the *circumstantial* of that religion, to make him fit to sustain a place of profit or trust? I take it *Papists* are excluded in our Protestant nation, for a very good reason, not on account of their religion, considered as such; but because they maintain *principles utterly inconsistent with the safety of a Protestant State*.

Did *Heathen Emperors* always insist upon it, that their officers should be of their religion, did they not admit *Christians* to posts of honour and trust? Were not the *Protestants* in *France*, before the revocation of the edict of *Nants*, qualified by law for offices in the state, and accordingly were so employed? Nay, do not the *Venetians* at this very time (1732) employ Count *Schulembergh* as their General, who is a *Protestant*? And can it be more dangerous for *England*, to employ a *Protestant of the Lutheran profession*, for instance, that yet does not see it proper or his duty to comply with our *Church establishment*? Why should *Episcopal Protestants*, be more rigorous than *Heathens*, than *Papists*!

May not a *Lutheran Protestant*, or a *Protestant* of any other persuasion, be a conscientious person, a truly good man? And he that is such, will faithfully, according to his ability, and as he hath opportunity, serve his God, his country, his king, his friend: And what reason should there be to exclude him? who could and would be of considerable public usefulness, might he but be employed. Or can it be supposed that a *Church of England* man in profession, but *immoral and vicious in practice*, is safer to be intrusted with power and authority, than a moral honest *Lutheran*, who unhappily, and yet conscientiously believes *Consubstantiation*?

Secondly, Whether our Blessed Lord ever designed the Sacrament for a *civil use*, or that it should be a test of a man's qualification, for a post in the Government, either in a civil or military way? If any one shall assert this is agreeable to Christ's design; he is bound to prove it.

If not,

If not, it will be difficult to shew, that the ordinance is herein not *perverted and misused*. It seems very plain to me, that Christ's appointments are to be kept *close to the design of their institution*, unless it can be shewn, that he has any where given leave to apply them to some other purpose, according to the pleasure of the civil magistrate. And I cannot but think, our civil governors would be very much displeased, and count it an interfering with *their authority*, should any *subordinate magistrate*, take upon him to apply their *laws and constitutions*, to quite different purposes from those for which they were made; and that they would be ready to inflict some punishment on the offender, in order to prevent any *daring attempt* of that nature for the future. And I would intreat those whom it may concern, to consider, whether the name of God is not taken in vain in this ordinance, when it is made use of to a purpose exceeding foreign to the design of its institution?

Thirdly, What must a *Clergyman* do, to avoid offending his conscience and displeasing God, as he thinks on the one hand, or being ruined on the other? Clergymen are under peculiar obligations, and they would be unfaithful stewards, if they should not be very much concerned for the honour of their great Lord, and for the credit of his institutions: And I suppose they remember Christ's express prohibition, (*k*) *Give not that which is holy unto dogs*; by which term profane and notoriously wicked men are certainly meant. Now I conceive a state should kindly endeavour, both for the *honour and comfort* of the clergy, as much as possible to remove all heavy burdens and incumbrances from them: Our state has done so, with respect to many civil matters; there seems greater reason as to concerns of a spiritual nature. But of this somewhat hath been said before.

Fourthly, Is it fit, or Christian-like, to reduce a man to this *sad dilemma*; I must starve in this world, or run the hazard of being damned (*l*) in the next? And though were even this the case, it is easy to say which a man should chuse; yet a *numerous family and pressing necessities*, which a man knows no other way of supplying comfortably, or even tolerably, will have a very powerful influence to make him comply with that which his conscience tells him he is not fit to engage in, that so he may obtain a comfortable subsistence. And though it may be said a man should *prepare himself and be fit* for such a service, yet saying so will not make a man so. I have heard of two instances, which I must say are very shocking, both of persons sensible of their unsuitness for so solemn an ordinance,

(*k*) Matth. vii. 6. (*l*) 1 Cor. xi. 29.

nance, and necessity calling upon them to qualify themselves for a place of profit.

The one thought to evade it, by putting the bread in his mouth and not eating it, but taking it out again as soon as he could, and putting it in his pocket in order to dispose of it some other way; and when the cup was delivered to him, only put it to his mouth and did not drink a drop.

The other having communicated, being filled with great horror, apprehending his great sin, and his exceeding danger for unworthy receiving; passionately and terribly broke forth into a curse, *wishing those d--ned that laid the obligation upon him.* It is possible several instances parallel to these may have happened; but if only these, it is sufficient to shew the inconvenience of laying such an obligation promiscuously, on all those of whom we are speaking.

But perhaps some may be ready to put me in mind, That the design of the law, that all Officers should receive the Sacrament according to the usage of the *Church of England*, was to keep out *Papists*, those implacable enemies to Protestant States.

Besides saying, we must not pursue a laudable design by *unwarrantable methods*, I would beg leave here also to query,

First, May not *Papists* (especially if some grand design be in view for the promoting their cause) have *dispensations* granted, to comply with any thing to prevent suspicion, and carry on their design the more securely? If they have had dispensations and commissions for the *grossest immoralities, perjuries*, murders, treasons* for the promoting their cause; nay have not some of them *poisoned their God* (as they suppose their Host to be) to compleat their *villainous designs*. I have read of an Emperor whom they so got rid of; and if the tragical history of *Jetzer* be to be credited, they have perpetrated such an horrid crime more than once. Can any thing bind them, one of the articles of whose creed it is, *That no faith is to be kept with Hereticks*? Can any thing assure us of the veracity of such, as are allowed with *their dying breath* to deny plainly proved facts? Surely then they may have a dispensation to communicate in a Protestant Church, and then the law will not answer its professedly designed end.

Secondly, May not some method be found out *more effectual* to exclude *Papists*, without *exposing* the solemn ordinance to a profanation and abuse? The greater number of those who are admitted to *offices*, have given no manner of occasion to *suspect* their being any other than *true Protestants*: However it is an
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* Those whom oaths will not bind, I cannot see how sacraments should bind them.

eafy matter to appoint only fuch as are *evidently* fuch. And if it fhould be thought fit to have fome *public* *teft*; would not a folemn *renunciation of the Pope*, or *transubftantiation*, or a general attendance upon the Proteftant way of worfhip, witneffed by credible perfons dwelling in the neighbourhood, be as fufficient to prove them no Papifts, as the method objected againft?

Thirdly, Are we *now* in any confiderable danger of the *intrufion of Papifts*, into places of power and trust? I apprehend not. Indeed the danger hereof was great, when the law I am referring to was firft made; but that danger; as far as I am capable of judging, has been over fome years. Now if the *reasons* of the *Corporation and Teft Acts* are now ceafed? May it not feem meet to *Parliamentary wifdom*, to repeal them? It is certain, the apparent and profeffed design of thefe laws was to exclude Papifts, and that not on account of their religion, as religion, but the principles they hold inconsistent with the fafety of our ftate. But it is not conceived we are in fo much immediate danger from them now as formerly.

Fourthly, Are not *Deifts* in reality greater enemies to the *Church of England* than *Papifts*, or any others designed to be excluded offices civil or military? Thefe are enemies to *Chriftianity itfelf*; and confequently muft be in a peculiar manner fo to the *Clergy*, whom they look upon with contempt, and muft think an unneceffary charge and burden upon the people: So that whatever the *State* has, the *Church* has reason to be jealous of them, left the *privileges and profits* of thofe who attend on her altars fhould be abridged and diminished, if thefe fhould get fufficient power in their hands. If any teft be neceffary, is it not more needful to have a teft of perfons being *Chriftians*, than of their being *Proteftants*, and more ftill than of their being *Proteftants of fuch a party or denomination*? And let it be confidered here, what a profanation and dreadful abufe of the Lord's Supper is it, to admit Deifts thereto, who cannot be fupposed to make any confcience of, or think themfelves obliged by that which they look upon as no more than a *trick and impofture*? To fee fuch an one on his knees, receiving the bread or cup, the memorials of our Lord's paffion and death, and *laughing in his fleeve* at the *Priestcraft* of the minifter, and the folly, as he thinks it, of thofe that mind or lay any ftrefs on fuch a fervice.*

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Fifthly,

* I am credibly informed that the late *Anthony Collins*, Efq; the reputed author

Fifthly, Whether if our *Protestant Dissenters*, are designed by the continuance of this injunction I am referring to (and it is evident that was not the professed design at the first enacting thereof) to be kept out of places of power and trust; it answers the end? Seeing many of them can and do conform occasionally; though there are some of them, whom even ambition, profit, or a prospect of service, do not prevail with to comply. If any dissenting Protestant hath *suitable qualifications* for the discharge of an office, and is thought fit to be employed in one by our superiors, their communicating according to the law, does not increase their *real fitness*. And if they are in themselves unfit, though communicating may give them a *legal qualification*, it cannot convey to them either *honesty or ability*. But if Protestant Dissenters are not designed to be excluded; one would think a stated attendance at a Protestant place of worship, certified by the minister and two or three of the heads of a congregation, to which a person belongs, should be sufficient to prove him a Protestant. But if it can be made appear, that those Protestant Dissenters, who having occasionally conformed, and got into places, have, generally speaking, been endeavouring to *undermine and ruin Church and State*; let the persons so behaving, be severely punished, and let such dangerous persons be more effectually excluded, that they may not be in a capacity of doing farther mischief. But let no solemn ordinance be profaned, to answer this end; remembering the Apostle's intimation, which ought to have its weight, *We must not do evil that good may come of it.* (m) Yea, we must be careful (n) *that our good be not evil spoken of.*

Upon the whole now, I would make this farther enquiry, Whether it is not the concern, yea, the duty of every one in his place, to desire, and modestly, and peaceably to endeavour to have this grievance redressed; this which seems to me to be a disorder, yea, profanation rectified? That this ordinance may be applied solely to its *proper, primitive, designed use*. I think our *nation is alone in this practice*; I
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author of several treatises tending to promote Deism,* being in commission for the peace, and therefore obliged to qualify himself according to the law; used to give notice of his design in this ludicrous manner to the minister; *Sir, I design to take a bit of bread and a cup of wine with you.* And when it was put close to him by a friend, how he could, consistent with his principles, engage in such a service, he turned it off thus: *I only do it* (said he) *to pay a compliment to the custom of my country.*

* These have been fully answered by several writers, both Churchmen and Dissenters.

EDITOR.

(m) Rom. iii. 8. (n) Rom. xiv. 16.

am not aware that any *Christian State besides*, applies a Christian ordinance designed *solely* by the institutor for *spiritual purposes*, to a civil use. And let no *Englishman* think himself unconcerned. If the practice be an abuse and profanation of the ordinance, then it is a *national sin*, an iniquity established by law, and on the account of which we are in danger of *national judgments*. And may it not very justly be supposed, that this practice has had a fatal tendency to *weaken Christianity*, and then the growth and prevalence of *Deism* and infidelity, is in a very great measure owing hereto. Let us consider, whether the abuse of the most solemn ordinance of the Christian institution, hath not a natural tendency to make men set light by all others, and then by the ministry, and so by Christianity itself? Will not men be apt to think that those who plead for this practice, do really look upon it as a matter of no such moment, as has been apprehended; nay, as only a *State trick*, for a *State use*? Will it not give occasion for reflection on the *Church of England*, either that her words and practices are to go for nothing, and that she doth not herself believe the dignity of this institution: Or, that notwithstanding the dignity, she is willing to permit its being lessened to *serve a purpose*? Every real Christian then, every true *Church of England* man, especially every Clergyman, who is a steward of the mysteries of Christ (*and it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful*) should use his regular endeavours to secure the honour of this ordinance. If Christ's Name, JESUS, which is only a sound, be to be bowed at, in token of respect to him whose name it is? Surely the Lord's Supper, the most awful and sacred of all Christian services, should be carefully secured from any thing that may have an unhappy influence to breed contempt of it, or less regard to it.

And as to magistrates, these, even though they be in the highest authority over us, and are our *legislators*, these, I say, as Christians, are under the *same obligations* as private Christians. And if there be any thing cogent in these papers, I should be glad they should be seen by, and have their proper influence with them, for whom I hope I have all suitable veneration; yea, that they might be conveyed to every magistrate and clergyman in the kingdom. Besides, if we consider our legislators in their political capacity as our rulers, who are to consult the public good and safety; what expectation can they have, that those men will prove true to them, that are not so to their God? And if once men come to think meanly of some divine appointments, magistracy
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being also an ordinance of God, may they not, ere long, think meanly of it? And I am persuaded they who are not for *suitable regulations in Church affairs*, will also be for *Anarchy in the State*. The conduct of the sectaries in the last age, in our own land, as well as those in *Germany* before, being sufficient proofs hereof. So that it is even politic for our Governors to secure the dignity of sacred institutions, and self-interest, were they to look no higher, should induce them thereto.

Beside, Let us consider, Governors were not constituted for their *own sake*, but the Divine Being mercifully appointed Government, and consequently Governors, for the sake of the *governed*. They are therefore to consult the honour of him who is vastly above them, and not give any occasion to the trampling of any of his appointments under foot. They are to be *custodes utriusque tabulæ*, must endeavour to secure the obedience of their subjects to every one of God's laws, (o) are to be *Ministers of God to them for good*, and are to take care both of the Religious and Civil Interests of a nation.

Our Governors have been religiously careful to prevent abuses and profanations in other cases; thus we have *proclamations* and *laws* against profaning the name of God, by swearing, cursing and blasphemy; and against profaning the *Lord's day*: It will not be so consistent, if they are not careful also to prevent profaning the Lord's table.

And suppose (if such a supposition may be made) any concerned in the legislature should be themselves inclined to *Deism*, and do not heartily embrace Christianity; they of all persons, sure, will look upon themselves obliged, from their *own principles*, to endeavour to take off an obligation to that which they imagine to be no other than *fancy* and *superstition*. Sure they will not have a hand in enforcing that which they look upon to be *priestcraft* and an *imposture*. I make use of this only as an *argumentum ad hominem*. But I must needs say, it would look but oddly, to see *Deists* calling upon men, and forcing them to observe a Christian institution, to secure their fidelity, when at the same time they believe there is no tye at all in it. This would be somewhat like *Jewish Inquisitors* of Spain.

Thus I have gone through what I proposed: The performance must be submitted to the peruser's judgment, who I hope will be candid, and that if he approves of it, he will endeavour to make it as extensively serviceable as he can.

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I have wrote what appeared to me to be true and useful. If I am mistaken, *scio me esse hominem*; I never thought myself infallible. And I think I may solemnly profess, that concern for the honour of Christ and this sacred ordinance, moved me to set pen to paper; and that I do not know that I had any private end to answer, or *selfish inducement*. I hope I have said nothing unbecoming; if I have it was undesigned, and when it is shewn me, I will humbly acknowledge it and beg pardon. I desire to have the utmost respect for magistrates, especially the legislature; and would make it my daily litany, that they may have wisdom as Angels of God, even that wisdom that is profitable to direct, that they may be men knowing the times and seasons, and that they may always have a careful regard for the honour of God, and the credit of all his institutions, which have a tendency to fit us more for his service in this world, and for the enjoyment of him in a better: And then I doubt not but God will prosper their designs and consultations for the civil good, and establish, and make them great in the sight of all the people.

POSTSCRIPT.

P O S T S C R I P T.

IN order to have evidenced, that I am not *alone* in my sentiments, concerning the *abuses* of the Lord's table, by *promiscuous admissions*, &c. I might have quoted the *authorities* of several very *learned and dignified Clergymen* of our Church. But I shall satisfy myself with transcribing a passage or two, from the worthy author of the *Penitential Discipline of the Primitive Church*, which he labours to have revived as far as would suit our times.

“ The design of Christ (says he) in gathering a Church, can never be promoted, whilst her most *sacred ordinances* are prostituted to people, either of *scandalous lives*, or who stand at an avowed defiance against *her authority*.” Page 215.

“ The Curate at present (says he in another place) seems to have a power of *separating offenders* from the Holy Communion, till they have given satisfaction for the offence they have been guilty of. But after such a long *disuse*, and such a continued universal neglect of discipline, the burden of reviving it (it is humbly apprehended) will be too weighty for the shoulders of any private Priest, except the higher powers shall both lend him their help to lighten it, and shall interpose with fresh authority to exact it from him.” And a little after.

“ Indeed as our *laws now stand*, the Clergy have a *melancholy time of it*, between the apprehensions of offending either God or man. Amongst us (as he observes afterwards) it is somewhat doubtful, whether if a *sinner of the first magnitude* should offer himself at the Holy table, for any *secular qualification*, the minister repelling him, might not be exposed to some *legal penalty*, or at least to the expense and hazard of a *troublesome prosecution*, for doing his duty and for refusing to admit even *notorious sinners*.”

He also quotes two passages for his and my purpose, which I doubt not but he has cited fairly, but not having the books I could not look into them myself. The former is from the *Apostolic Constitutions*, which though they are not really, as is generally owned, of the Apostles compiling, yet they are certainly very ancient.

Εαν εν κ' ανθρωπον παρανομον μη της Εκκλησιας τε Θεοι χορισομεν, ποιησομεν τον οικον Κυρις σπηλαιον λησων, Lib. 2, cap. 17.

Which he translates thus :

“ If we do not separate from the Church those who will not live within the *rules of it*, we shall make of the House of God a *Den of Thieves*.”

The other is St. *Chrysostom's* Homily on *Matthew xxvi.* No. 83.

Ου μικρα κολασις υμιν εστιν, ει συνειδοτες τινι πονηριαν, συγχωρησητε μειλασχειν ταυτης της τραπεζης· το αιμα αυτε εκ των χειρων εκζητηθησεται των υμετερων· καν στρατηγος τις η, καν υπαρχ^θ, καν αυτος δε το διαδημα περικειμεν^θ, αναξιως δε προσειη, κωλυσον, μειζονα εκεινη την εξεσιαν εχεις.

Which is thus rendered :

“ It is no small penalty which they shall incur, if they suffer any to partake of the Holy table, whom they know to be guilty of *deadly sin*, (i. e. as I suppose the translator means, and the original properly signifies, heinous or enormous crime) and that the *blood of such shall be required at their hands* That therefore if any *General* of an army, or a *Consul*, or even the *Emperor himself*, should offer to approach under such circumstances, they were boldly to oppose his admission, as being vested (for such purposes) with a *power superior* to any earthly potentates.”

T H E E N D.

The Board has the pleasure to announce that the accounts for the year ending 31st March 1974 have been audited and found correct.

The following table shows the results of the year:

£ million
Revenue 10.5
Operating expenses 8.5
Operating profit 2.0
Finance charges 0.5
Profit before tax 1.5
Tax 0.3
Profit after tax 1.2

The profit after tax is £1.2 million, compared with £1.0 million in 1973.

The Board has decided to recommend a dividend of 10p per share for the year ending 31st March 1974. This represents an increase of 10% on the dividend of 9p per share paid in 1973.

The Board also recommends that the reserves should be increased by £1.2 million, to £12.0 million. This will be done by transferring the profit after tax to the reserves.



T H E B O A R D